June 29, 2007: "There can be no question of India's firm and abiding commitment to non-alignment. The Non Aligned Movement played a significant role in ending apartheid and colonialism. Today, its relevance continues in promoting South-South cooperation and the democratization of the international system. India remains committed to its ideals."

(b) to (d) India had hosted the 7th NAM Summit in New Delhi in March, 1983. Egypt's offer to host the next 15th NAM Summit in 2009 was accepted by the previous NAM Summit in Cuba.

Problems of Tamils in Sri Lanka

1282. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Sri Lankan Tamils live in great fear, panic and desperation as LTTE on the one side and Sri Lankan Army on the other vow to continue the battle resulting killing of thousands of innocent Tamils indiscriminately and the process of peace is farfetched;

(b) if so, the measures taken by Government to save innocent Tamils being killed; and

(c) whether the issue would be taken to Geneva Meet of UN Human Rights Council particularly about the Refugees Camps in Tamil Nadu?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) There have been hostilities between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE since the beginning of 2006, which have resulted in serious loss of lives including that of Tamil civilians.

(b) and (c) While conveying our concern on civilian casualties, we have emphasised to the Government of Sri Lanka that the only solution to the ethnic problem is a negotiated political settlement acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka. We have also emphasised to the Government of Sri Lanka the need to make all possible efforts to revive the peace process. With regard to the issue of Sri Lankan Tamil refuges in India, we have stressed to the Government of Sri Lanka the need to create conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees to their homes.

Cut in US aid to India

1283. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Bush administration has proposed an unwarranted 35 percent cut in aid to India in its 2008 Budget;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) what would be its impact on the ongoing programmes in clean energy development, water and sanitation and basic education, etc.; and

(d) the areas where US aid was being utilized in India?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes. According to US Government, this cut has been proposed due to categorisation of India as a 'transforming State' instead of a 'developing' one, in view of India's characterisation as among the world's best performing economies and its emergence as a significant donor in its own right.

(c) These programmes are not expected to be affected by the proposed cut as the amount of the US aid is not significant when compared to the money spent by the Central and the State Governments to address the issues of clean energy development, water and sanitation and basic education.

(d) US aid in India is being utilised to support US participation in bilateral health programmes, disaster management strategies, energy and environment issues, education and skill development, women empowerment, agriculture and allied activities etc.

Maritime security package

1284. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India unveiled a maritime security package for the benefit of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF);

(b) if so, the salient features of this package;

(c) whether India is going to design and conduct a training module on maritime security;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether this forum would also address the issue of global terrorism; and

(f) if so, to what extent Pakistan and China are going to cooperate on this issue?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Yes. At the meeting of the 14th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila on 2 August, 2007, India offered assistance to ARF member states in building capacity to ensure the safety and security of sea-lanes passing through the region. It was announced that India would be designing and conducting a training module on maritime security specifically for the ARF Member States, with the themes of anti-piracy, search and rescue, offshore and port security, anti-smuggling and narcotics control and anti-poaching operations.

(e) and (f) The ARF is addressing the issue of terrorism through its Inter-sessional meeting (ISM) on counter-terrorism and transnational crime. ARF countries, including China and Pakistan, participate in meetings of the ISM.